

Press release: Sea change for migrating smolts

The Environment Agency has carried out underwater sonar surveys to check for young salmon using a new route across the Tees Barrage gates.

And the results show the juveniles – known as smolts – successfully making their journey from spawning grounds upstream out to sea.

It follows changes to the operation of the Tees Barrage in 2015, which means on every tidal cycle the gates are lowered to allow fish to pass both upstream and downstream.

Surveys have shown the barrage gates are the main route for salmon migrating upstream and the automation of the gates has resulted in an extra 1,500 hours per year of fish passage for returning adult salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds.

It's in addition to the other routes that salmon use including the Barrage's navigation lock, the Denil fish pass, the fish pass in the white water rafting centre, and the main canoe slalom.

Downstream migration improved

Phil Rippon, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

As well as improving the routes for returning adult fish we are also looking to improve the downstream migration of these precious fish and maximise the number of smolts reaching the North Sea.

By lowering the main barrage gates at set times, it means that as well as providing an additional upstream route for adult salmon we are providing a much easier route for the young salmon moving downstream as well. It is known that the sooner the smolts reach the sea the better their survival chances are, resulting in more returning adult fish.

Our recent work using an underwater sonar has shown large numbers of smolts using the gates to pass successfully downstream. It's really positive to see yet more evidence that salmon are spawning upstream and these youngsters have been living in the river for up to 3 years before they move out to the sea.

Every year smolts, which are between 1 and 3 years old, leave the river to start their feeding migrations to the sea – travelling as far as Greenland – where they will spend up to three more years as an adult salmon before returning to the river to spawn.

Smolts are vulnerable throughout their migration and only around 5% of those that leave the river will return to spawn the next generation of salmon.

[Underwater sonar footage of River Tees smolts crossing the Tees Barrage](#)

Steering group

The Tees Barrage Fish Pass and Operation Steering Group, made up of Tees Barrage owners the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation Trust, Tees Rivers Trust, Industries Nature Conservation Association and Tees Barrage International White Water Centre, oversees the monitoring and research of fish and seal populations and carried out action to improve fish passage.

Research to understand the preferred routes through the barrage for fish and how to make it easier for them while reducing seal predation has been the focus of recent surveys.

Last year also saw the use of an acoustic deterrent device (ADD) to deter seals from entering the navigation lock, which showed promising results. Phil added:

We're working really hard together with our partners to understand how fish naturally try to pass through the barrage and then to make it as easy as possible for them. We've changed the way the main gates and navigation lock operate to allow more fish passage, and we'll be using an acoustic deterrent device again this summer.

We want as many fish as possible to make it upstream to their spawning grounds to ensure the River Tees continues to improve.

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[Press release: Fruit retailer fined after failing to meet marketing standards](#)

Appearing at Sunderland Magistrates on 11 June, Marc Philip Farnsworth, owner

of M Farnsworth, in Bede Precinct, Jarrow, was found guilty of displaying and offering for sale fresh fruit below the minimum standards permitted.

The court fined Mr Farnsworth £1,000 and ordered him to pay full investigation costs of £2,826, prosecution costs of £620, and a £100 Victims Surcharge – making a total penalty awarded of £4,546.

The case was brought following an investigation by the Rural Payments Agency's (RPA) Horticultural Marketing Inspectors (HMI). The inspectors are responsible for the enforcement of the EU marketing standards for fresh fruit, vegetables, salad crops, nuts and cultivated mushroom, throughout England and Wales, wherever fresh produce is grown, imported, exported, bought or sold. These standards will continue to be enforced after we have left the European Union.

Several visits were made to the Jarrow store, during which inspectors found it was selling apples that were severely bruised– making them unfit for human consumption. Rotten figs and bruised and rotten peaches were also for sale.

Mark Buckle, regional manager for HMI, said:

On visiting the store our inspectors found apples that were so badly bruised they should not be eaten – let alone placed for sale. Repeated attempts were made to engage the store's owner in addressing the issues, but he failed to take action and it was necessary to progress this through the courts.

We will do all we can to ensure unsatisfactory produce is kept off the market. The fine received here should serve as a warning to others that if they are not labelling products correctly, or selling fruit and veg that is of an unacceptable quality then action will be taken against them.

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[News story: 2018 Appointments to IRP](#)

For more information and to apply please visit the Public Appointments website at: [Cabinet Office](#)

For alternative formats please call Julia Peters on 0113 254 5350 quoting the reference A17-62.

The closing date for applications is midday on 5th July 2018.